

Double Identities in Dorce's Comedies

Negotiating Gender and Class in New Order Indonesian Cinema

Ben Murtagh*

SOAS University of London

bmi10@soas.ac.uk

Abstract

Dorce Gamalama is one of Indonesian television's best-known celebrities. She first rose to fame in the 1980s and her career is very much based on her public profile as a transsexual woman. This article focuses on Dorce's performance of gender and class in two films: *Dorce ketemu jodoh* (Dorce meets her match, 1990) and *Dorce sok akrab* (Dorce up close, 1989). In *Dorce ketemu jodoh*, Dorce represents herself as a woman, albeit one who is unlike other women, and who is confident enough in her gender identity not to shy away from gender playfulness. In *Dorce sok akrab*, Dorce's character encapsulates the possibility for upward social mobility as an integral aspect of New Order development ideology, though it is a mobility which strongly resists notions of Westernization and elitism, and is instead firmly rooted in local forms of cultural identity.

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Keywords

Indonesian cinema – transgender identity – transsexual women – social classes

This article discusses two Indonesian lowbrow comedy films from the late New Order period (1966–1998): *Dorce ketemu jodoh* (Dorce meets her match, dir. Mardali Syarief, 1990) and *Dorce sok akrab* (Dorce up close, dir. Yazman Yazid, 1989).¹ Both films star Dorce Gamalama, who at the time was one of many entertainers beginning to make their way in the Indonesian entertainment industry. However, with the benefit of hindsight we know that she went on to become a star of stage and screen. Dorce is also one of Indonesia's best-known transsexual women.² A close viewing of these two films is useful not just for what is revealed about the construction of Dorce as a celebrity who crossed both gender and class boundaries, but also for what the films tell us about cultural attitudes to gender and social mobility in late New Order Indonesia. By looking at these two films, which have apparently contrasting themes, Dorce's transition in terms of both gender and social status will be brought together into one analysis. Discussion of the films will be supplemented by material drawn from Dorce's 2005 autobiography *Aku perempuan: Jalan berliku seorang Dorce Gamalama* (I am a woman: The winding path of Dorce Gamalama), co-written with Rudy Gunawan.³ Before turning to the two films, it will be useful

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- 1 There are no official English translations for the titles of these two films. Given the difficulty of literal translations I have chosen translations which try to capture both the meaning of the title in Indonesian and the essence of the films. For *Dorce sok akrab*, it should be noted that 'sok', which is almost impossible to translate precisely into English, indicates pretension, perhaps suggesting a fakeness to the implied closeness.
 - 2 Dorce underwent sex reassignment surgery in Surabaya in 1985. Her change of name and gender was recognized legally in 1988. This was not the first such case in Indonesian legal history. In 1973 Vivian Rubianti (formerly Iwan Robbyanto Iskandar) successfully petitioned the Court of West and South Jakarta to recognize her change in name and gender. In the contemporaneous reports on Dorce's surgery, reference is often made to the case of Vivian in the previous decade. However, while Vivian is remembered mainly as a historical footnote who has long disappeared from public view, Dorce has maintained her public profile to this day.
 - 3 As Aquarini Priyatna has argued, the book can be considered as an autobiography, given that Dorce is the author and subject of the narrative. At the same time, the existence of a co-writer is suggestive of a biography and this blurring of boundaries between the act of writing about self and other encapsulates the complex narrative of writing about the public and private lives of Dorce (Priyatna 2015:212–3).

to first look briefly at Dorce's background and also, given the theme of gender confusion evident in both films, to discuss conceptions of the categories of transgender and transsexual as they are understood in Indonesia. I will also consider key concepts related to trans-identities, in particular the notion of inbetweenness (Bornstein 1994), which refers to a refusal to allow transsexual figures to be understood in terms of the identity which they have assumed (rather than what they used to be).

Dorce Gamalama, often known simply as Dorce, and formerly known as Dorce Ashadi, is one of the best-known faces on Indonesian television, primarily as a result of her four and a half year run on the *Dorce show* on the TransTV channel. Her dominance of daytime television was such that she has been referred to as the Indonesian Oprah Winfrey,⁴ though, as her own biographer counters, that would be a denial of the fact that Dorce is 'completely her own person' (Ellis 2005:40). Even since *Dorce show* came to an end, in May 2009, Dorce has continued to appear on television and is a frequent subject of discussion in the popular media. Numerous column inches have been filled reporting her extensive charitable giving and patronage of orphanages, her various marriages, and perhaps most notoriously her attendance of the funeral of the Bali Bomber, Imam Samudra.⁵ She is one of Indonesia's true entertainers. Equally happy on stage and screen she is a singer, comedian, actor, and talk-show host who prides herself on having performed in front of six presidents of the republic (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:80–6).⁶

Dorce was born Dedi Yuliardi on 21 July 1963 in Solok, West Sumatra. After the early death of her parents she was cared for by her grandmother, and at the age of five they moved to Jakarta. She has lived in Java ever since, mainly in Jakarta, but has also spent some time in East Java. In 1985 she underwent sex reassignment surgery in Surabaya. By this time she was already developing a name for herself on the entertainment and cabaret circuit, primarily as a singer and comedian, but it was after her transition that Dorce rose to become such a star. Her broad appeal to the Indonesian public is exemplified by the fact that most Indonesians will be knowledgeable of who she is and of her life story. While clearly now a very wealthy and successful woman, her style and

4 Arief Firhanusa, 'Dorce menampar TransTV', *Kompasiana*, 31-1-2014. http://www.kompasiana.com/firhanusa/dorce-menampar-transTV_553019586ea834b8258b45d6 (accessed 23-8-2016).

5 Alamsyah, 'Dorce hadir pemakaman Imam Samudra', *DetikNews*, 9-11-2008. <http://news.detik.com/berita/1033864/dorce-hadiri-pemakaman-imam-samudra> (accessed 23-8-2017).

6 In her autobiography she describes her appearance in front of five presidents, from Soeharto to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Footage of her appearance in front of Joko Widodo (26-8-2014), Indonesia's current president, can easily be found on YouTube.

manner do not hide the fact that she was born of humble origins, and this is undoubtedly a key aspect of her attraction.

Dorce first signed the contracts for the two films with production companies in 1987, though delays meant they were eventually released in 1989 and 1990. Apparently she first signed a film deal with Raam Punjabi of Parkit Films (now Multivision Plus) in 1987. Then, a few days later, Bola Dunia Films offered a similar contract, which she also signed. She notes in her autobiography that much to her embarrassment the resulting conflict ended up in court. Eventually, she states, the two films were made under the flags of both production companies (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:76–9).⁷ Dorce explains in her biography that she came to make these two films so close together due to an innocence regarding the workings of the film industry. However, it should not be written off as mere coincidence that these two production companies were both courting her in 1987. By this time Dorce was a rising star who had attracted sufficient attention to begin a television career to supplement her concert and cabaret performances. After some appearances on the local Surabaya station of TVRI (Television Republic Indonesia), she also began appearing as an entertainer on the stage at Ancol, the entertainment complex in North Jakarta. It was there that she was spotted by then minister for information Harmoko, who recommended her to the director of TVRI in Jakarta. In 1989 she began her career on national television with her first appearance being part of the 27th anniversary celebrations of TVRI (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:72).

While one news report⁸ from 1989 suggests that Dorce had signed up for five films with a flat payment of 23 million rupiah,⁹ they never came to fruition. The sequel that is promised at the end of *Dorce sok akrab*—‘Until we meet again in *Dorce sok akrab II*’—was never made, despite the fact that sequels or films featuring the same groups of comic actors were extremely popular in Indonesia as a marketing tool at that time. Maybe the production companies involved did not see further investment as worthwhile because of poor box office receipts or due to the complications caused by Dorce signing up with two production companies at the same time. Perhaps Dorce had now made her mark on film and was more interested in pursuing the next stage of her career. She did not return to the silver screen until her appearance in *Mas suka, masukin aja: Besar*

7 The opening credits of *Dorce sok akrab* list its producers as Dhamoo, Gobind, and Raam Punjabi. These credits state that the film was produced by Parkit Films in cooperation with Bola Dunia Film. *Dorce ketemu jodoh* does not include a credit of cooperation; the main production company was PT Bola Dunia Film.

8 ‘Dorce sok akrab mulai’, *Berita Buana*, 22-9-1989.

9 Approximately US\$12,400.

kecil it's OK (If you like it, just stick it in: Big or small, it's OK, dir. KK Dheera, 2008). The films *Dorce sok akrab* and *Dorce ketemu jodoh* are today relatively forgotten, except when cited as evidence of the duration of her career in the entertainment industry. In her biography only two pages are devoted to this early foray into film-making, and most of the details are about the dispute that arose between the two film companies rather than comments or anecdotes relating to the films themselves (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:76–9).

Recordings of Dorce's early performances have been lost or are difficult to come by, so the survival of the two films discussed in this article could lead us to place undue emphasis on the role these films played in the furthering of her career and profile. Therefore, it is important that we recognize that these two films were simply one part of her trajectory to national stardom. Nonetheless, the two films do provide useful evidence of her performance style at that time. They are also evidence of the strength of her existing profile such that two different production companies sought to invest in films which would be marketed primarily on the strength of her name. When reading contemporary reports about the two films it is clear that the articles and reviews were written for audiences already familiar with Dorce. While undoubtedly many viewers, and certainly reporters, would have known about Dorce's sex reassignment surgery, the reviews do not focus on this or even mention it. Rather, they tend to comment on Dorce's strength as a performer and comedy actor, even when there is some criticism of production techniques and poor editing.¹⁰

Both *Dorce ketemu jodoh* and *Dorce sok akrab* revolve around issues of identity confusion. The confusion in *Dorce ketemu jodoh* regards the titular character's gender, and perhaps lack of clarity as to whether Dorce the actor is a man or a woman. Misunderstandings in *Dorce sok akrab* revolve around mistaken identity and class. The confusions in both films resonate with important changes occurring in Dorce's life; the class-based comedy reflects Dorce's journey from poverty to wealth and associated implications for class and status, while the theme of gender fluidity that is evident in both films reminds us of Dorce's own transition. These changes echo certain wider changes to society during the late New Order.

We might ask how it is possible that a transsexual woman was able to become such a big star under the New Order and into the post-New Order period. This question becomes particularly pertinent given the anti-LGBT hysteria of 2016–2017 (Davies 2016; Boellstorff 2016). But we should note that in the Indonesian context Dorce's films were neither unique nor pioneering for touch-

10 'Dorce diperkosa Amak', *Jayakarta Minggu*, 2-12-1990.

ing on issues of representing cross-dressing in film, nor for starring a transsexual woman. This was a period that saw increasing media discussion of proliferating sexual and gender identities, particularly from the early 1980s onwards (Murtagh 2013; Boellstorff 2005:66–78; Blackwood 2010:47–53). The late New Order period also saw an increasing willingness to engage with *gay*, *lesbi* and *waria*¹¹ (male to female transvestite or transgender) issues by Indonesian film directors (Murtagh 2013). There were a number of *waria*, or more often perhaps entertainers who cross-dressed, in popular cinema during the New Order¹² (Murtagh 2013:22–49; Yngvesson 2015:371). Indeed, Mardali Syarief, the director of *Dorce ketemu jodoh*, had already written and directed *Mereka memang ada* (They indeed exist) in 1982, a film focusing on the lives of *waria*.¹³ Dorce was not even the first transsexual woman to star in an Indonesian film; Vivian Rubianti, who underwent sex reassignment surgery in 1973, had starred in her own film in the late 1970s, *Akulah Vivian: Laki-laki jadi perempuan* (I am Vivian: A man who became a woman, dir. Endraatmadja, 1978) (Murtagh 2013:36–44).

The 1980s also saw a notable growth in the size of the middle class, notably on the back of the 1970s oil boom (Gerke 2002:145; Dick 1985:71). Dorce's trajectory to wealth, while not uncommon for stars of entertainment and sport, was atypical of the general pattern for the growth of the middle class in New Order Indonesia, which was generally based on the enlargement of the civil service that in turn built on expanding access to higher education (Dick 1985:71; Gerke 2002:144). Nonetheless, in other respects her upward mobility reflected the New Order's ideology of personal engagement and responsibility for one's own future as the keys to economic success (Gerke 2002:143). Despite its still relatively small numbers in the 1980s, the inevitably broad meaning of the term 'middle class' can, as several contemporary scholars noted, hide a wide range of political affinities (Robison 1990; Young 1990) and a tremendous range of personal wealth and earnings (Mackie 1990). Dorce's wealth was comparable with the earnings of those at the very top-end of the urban population that was defined as middle class in the 1980s.¹⁴

11 All Indonesian words are italicized in this article. I italicize words such as *gay*, *lesbi*, *transgender* and *transeksual* when using them as they are used in Indonesia—not to exoticize the terms, but to recognize that there is slippage in meaning as categories move from one language and culture to another.

12 The breadth of these representations is a field still requiring more research.

13 I have to date been unable to locate a copy of this film. A synopsis is contained in Kristanto (2007:229).

14 On estimates on the size of the middle class and its composition in the 1980s, see Mackie 1990; Dick 1985; Crouch 1984.

Concern around middle-class and elite consumption was a common trope in films of the late 1980s and early 1990s. While the principle of modernity was not in question, there was immense cultural anxiety about the type of modernity that was manifesting in Jakarta, and part of this anxiety was about the place of Western values and their influence on Indonesia's citizens (Brenner 1999). The unnamed author of a 1986 *Kompas* article titled 'Young professionals of Jakarta' (republished in translation in 1990), which explored the life of the new, young, wealthy middle class, notes a tendency to focus on symbols of Westernization and modernity—foreign holidays, Western restaurants, and the like—as a way to stay close to their own group, and by implication to maintain and reinforce their own privileged status (*Kompas* 1990:170–2). The suggestion in the somewhat critical *Kompas* article is that status matters above all other factors such as work ethic, search for knowledge, and so on. While recognizing this group of professionals as being caught between a desire for Western symbols and an inability to let go of traditional values, the *Kompas* author focuses on very similar tropes to those which, as we will see, are criticized in one of Dorce's films.

Transgender, Transsexual, *Waria*, *Banci*, and Woman

One of the challenges in writing this article relates to language, since there is a lack of specificity in many of the terms used in Indonesia today to categorize and describe alternative sexualities and genders. The variety of terms used by the Indonesian public to describe Dorce reflects an often imprecise public understanding of transgender identities, coupled with a general tendency—including in some elements of the media—to use slang terms, which many transgender individuals would consider derogatory. Furthermore, having been a public figure for almost thirty years, the language used to describe Dorce also reflects the fluid and changing identities with which Dorce has been, and is still, associated. In paying attention to the language used by media critics and Dorce's portrayal of gender in her films, this article is careful not to essentialize transgender and transsexual subject positions (Johnson 1998:695), but rather aims to appreciate the specific spatial and temporal contexts from which the films emerged.

The adjective 'transsexual' is understood in this article as part of the broader category of transgender, a far from homogenous category in which some transgender identities may deconstruct and challenge notions of gender binaries while others might seem to affirm fixed gender binaries. The word 'transsexual' is taken to describe somebody who has transitioned from one gender to another—in the case of Dorce from male to female—and who has realigned

their gender and sex through medical intervention. *Transeksual*, as an Indonesian word, is used in Indonesia, though rarely. The word *transgender* is more commonly used, though generally only among NGO activists, some academics, and those who are more acquainted with Western discourse on alternative genders and sexualities. If these words are used in popular discourse, the meaning tends to be rather imprecise, and there is little obvious agreement on how these terms accord with, or differentiate from, the popularly used term of *waria*.

Waria is the Indonesian word which many would popularly understand as being equivalent, or at least near equivalent, to the English term 'transgender'. However, it is still not particularly common for *waria* to transition.¹⁵ Tom Boellstorff (2005:67) argues that this is not only because of the costs, but because most *waria* see themselves as men. This is the reason he prefers to understand *waria* as male-to-female transvestites, rather than as transgender women, because *waria* are still understood as falling within the domain of male gender. Thus, for Boellstorff, the notion of transgender 'with an implication of a moving beyond gender' is not really applicable to *waria* (Boellstorff 2007:82). A similar warning on the possible limitations of the term 'transgender' is put forward by Sharyn Graham Davies (2010) in her work on alternative gender identities in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. While using the catch-all term 'transgender', she also recognizes its limitations for the Indonesian situation due to its implication of 'crossing from one reified normative gender to the other' (Davies 2010:13). The subjects of her study, *calalai* ('female born individuals who rework the category woman and who do not necessarily wish to be considered men') and *calabai* ('male born individuals who rework the category man and who do not necessarily wish to be considered women') of South Sulawesi do not necessarily aim to achieve one gender through the complete rejection of the other (Davies 2010:10).

Nonetheless, some individuals who have previously identified as *waria* (or another local term with a similar meaning) do see themselves as women, and undergo sex-reassignment surgery as part of their transition. Dorce is one of them. However, illustrative of the fluidity in terminology, many Indonesians—including several *waria* I have spoken to—continue to see Dorce as *waria*. The recent Australian documentary *High heels and hijabs* (dir. David O'Shea)¹⁶ refers to Dorce as a '*waria* comedian'. In popular usage, slang terms will often categorize *gay* men and *waria* together, suggesting a general concern to group

15 The same seems to be even truer of transgender men in Indonesia. While Boellstorff (2005:161) states that some informants expressed an interest in surgery, he did not come across any actual cases.

16 First broadcast at 21:30 on 3-3-2015 on SBS One.

as 'the other' those who are not perceived as normal in terms of gender and sexuality, rather than to respect or appreciate gender or sexual difference. Examples of such pejorative terms are *banci* and *bencong*, which are popularly used for *waria*, though these can also be used for *gay* men as well as men deemed effeminate in some way.¹⁷

In her biography, Dorce's description of her feelings as a young child are similar to accounts that many *waria* have given, narrating how she did not feel like the boy that her physical body suggested, and that she felt like a girl inside with different mannerisms and qualities:

As a young boy my feelings were too soft and gentle. I was easily touched [emotionally]. My body language was very feminine. Everyone could see it. I preferred mixing and playing with girls. I felt like we shared the same soul whenever I socialized with them. I had their thoughts, feelings and soul. But unfortunately, those things were trapped in the body of a boy^{18,19}

GAMALAMA and GUNAWAN 2005:25–6

The biography also conveys a strong sense that those around her did not understand who she was. As she says repeatedly, 'I was different'. The very first paragraph of the biography ends 'And finally they gave me the name Dedi Yulardi. A boy's name. Because they thought I was a boy'²⁰ (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:1). With that difference came the teasing and abuse from those around her as she was called *banci*. Further to the feeling of being trapped inside a boy's body, Dorce describes how her body was also different to that of other boys, a point of difference from accounts of some *waria*; she never grew hair on her legs or had to shave a moustache, and she never had a visible Adam's apple (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:27–8). Thus, her sense of difference is described as being both physical and emotional.

17 When used among *waria* and *gay* men themselves, the term *banci* would not have this pejorative implication. For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Boellstorff (2007:114–5).

18 'Sebagai laki-laki perasaanku terlampau lembut. Aku mudah tersentuh. Bahasa tubuhku sangat keperempuan-perempuanan. Semua orang bisa melihatnya. Aku lebih suka berkumpul dan bermain dengan anak perempuan. Aku merasa kecocokan jiwa setiap berbaur dengan mereka. Aku mempunyai pikiran-pikiran, perasaan, dan jiwa mereka. Namun sayangnya, hal tersebut terkurung dalam tubuh anak laki-laki.'

19 All translations from Indonesian are my own.

20 'Dan akhirnya mereka memberiku nama Dedi Yulardi. Nama laki-laki. Karena mereka pikir aku laki-laki.'

Prior to her transition, or maybe while in transition, Dorce was a member of the Jakarta *waria* troop The Fantastic Dolls, and had been known as something of a spokesperson for the *waria* community. However, following her transition this identification changed (Anderson 1996:285). While she might have once considered herself as a *waria*, or at least very similar to *waria*, and had had *waria* friends, in interviews and publicity subsequent to her transition, and also in her auto/biography, she stresses her difference from *waria* and establishes her identity as a woman. Thus, when recalling the period in which she was part of The Fantastic Dolls, she is careful to differentiate herself from her *waria* colleagues, not just in terms of her pride in the fact that she was never promiscuous, but also because, 'I wanted to be a real woman (*perempuan yang benar*)' (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:30). As she notes, when recollecting a time just before her surgery, 'I was almost the same as them [*waria*] except that I longed to be a true woman, not merely a false woman'²¹ (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:34).

Dorce has commented that she would not have been accepted by her majority Muslim public if she had not undergone sex-reassignment surgery. In an interview in 2005 she stated:

When I was still a man [...] I would go to the mosque dressed as a woman. It was this contradiction, among other things that finally led me to have the sex-change operation. There is no way people would have accepted me the way they do now if I hadn't become a woman. People want black or white.

ELLIS 2005:41

It is this self-definition in terms of gender binaries, and this distancing of herself from the more marginalized *waria* and LGBT communities, that perhaps explains why she has been so enduringly successful. Above all, though, I would argue, it is that rather intangible characteristic of charisma or stage presence that explains her stardom, and it is her story of triumph over adversity that ensures she remains accessible to her large body of fans.

A recent television interview focusing on the topic of *transgender* on the Indonesian chat show *Ada-ada aja*, screened on 15 October 2014, is useful in understanding how Dorce wishes to be understood. While she was presumably happy to participate in a show that specifically drew attention to her transi-

21 'Aku bahkan hampir sama dengan mereka walau ada sebuah keinginan untuk menjadi perempuan sejati, bukan sekedar perempuan palsu.'

tion, she points out that she does not know many other *transgender* individuals in Indonesia, besides Ibu Myrna, the former chair of the Jakarta-based Himpunan Waria (Hiwaria, Waria Association),²² and seems to wish to distance herself from other *transgender* individuals, including the other guest on the segment, a younger, male-to-female transsexual, called Solena Chaniago. She states that she prefers to be known for what she does, as an entertainer who does not specifically show off and sexualize her body and who is known for her charitable works. In that television discussion, the term *transgender* is used to describe the two guests, and they themselves appear to identify with the label, though Dorce herself also uses the term *transeksual* on at least one occasion.²³ She does not refer to herself as *waria* or *banci*.

In JB Kristanto's catalogue of Indonesian films, the entry for *Dorce ketemu jodoh* describes the main character, and also the actor playing her, as a *banci* (Kristanto 2007:343).²⁴ It is not clear if this entry is based on a pre-existing synopsis or a viewing of the film, but the key point to note is that when the film was being planned and written, Dorce had already transitioned. The use of the term *banci* is clearly problematic and evidently disrespectful to Dorce. It both highlights a lack of understanding of the variety of alternative gender identities in Indonesia and shows insensitivity on the part of the author. At the time of the film's release, and certainly at the time of the catalogue's 2007 publication, Dorce was not a *waria* (or certainly did not identify as one). The use of the term *banci*—and it is not just in the catalogue that we find such usage—seems to relate to a refusal to accept that Dorce herself identifies as a woman, and signifies a desire to highlight and restate a perceived lack of normativity in her identity. Drawing on Judith Butler (1999:xi) and Kate Bornstein (1994), I consider this to be an example of a public refusal to allow a transsexual woman

22 Myrna, also known as Bambang Wisnu, was one of the two members of the Bambang Brothers, and in 1977 went on to become a founding member of The Fantastic Dolls (Atmojo 1986:18–9; Murtagh 2013:48–9 n. 19). These are two of the groups with which Dorce had her first experience as an entertainer (Gamalama and Gunawan 2005:28–9).

23 The interview is available on YouTube; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFKgAUYEaTA>, accessed 17-05-2007. The main interviewer, Dave Hendrick, and his co-host, Ayu Ting-Ting, generally use the term *transgender* rather than *transeksual* in the show.

24 The full entry in Kristanto (2007:343) translates as follows: 'Story about a *banci* named Dorce (Dorce), played by a *banci* of the same name. Dorce moves from Surabaya to Jakarta to become a pub singer. In this nightlife environment, Dorce finds love. From Tante Gladiol (Ida Kusumah) who thinks Dorce is a handsome young man, and from Nico (Harry Capri) who considers Dorce the most beautiful girl in the world. Here Dorce chooses to be just one gender, a choice out of sync with her natural physicality (*kodrat fisiknya*) as a man.'

to be understood as what she has become (rather than what she used to be), and the state of constant 'inbetweenness' in which transsexual people, whether they like it or not, are placed.

In discussing her research on transgender identities in the UK, Sally Hines warns that 'the lack of emphasis upon particularity within queer theory has led to a homogenous theorization of transgender' (Hines 2006:49). Her study, which is based on interviews with UK-based individuals who identify in various ways with the transgender category, seeks to move beyond a 'universal understanding of the term "transgender" so as to recognize the diversity of trans subjectivities' (Hines 2006:49). Hines argues that 'rather than signifying universal transgression or dominant gender conformity' her research points to subjectivities and identities that are 'contingently situated alongside divergent gendered experiences' (Hines 2006:64). Here, Hines is drawing on Viviane Namaste's argument that in seeing 'transgender as a "category crisis"' and as evidence for the destabilizing and deconstructing of gender binaries, the 'possibility of transgender as an identity itself has been undermined' (Namaste 1996:189).

In focusing on Dorce's roles in these two films, I try to pay heed to Namaste's caution to queer studies academics that 'transsexuals are not your entertainment' (Namaste 1996:185), a warning particularly significant given that Dorce's two films were of course made specifically for entertainment purposes.²⁵ Given the fact that the films discussed were made for a postulated heterosexual audience, Namaste's problematizing of the usage of the category transsexual in order to theorize the troubling of gender without paying due attention to the complexities of every-day lived experiences is pertinent. This is particularly so because, like many of those studies critiqued by Namaste, my primary sources are textual rather than ethnographic. Nonetheless, by also drawing upon Dorce's autobiography and other interviews I hope that these criticisms may be avoided, and as such this study will take into account two equally important aspects in the construction of Dorce's public identity: her own writ-

25 I am aware that it might be considered intrusive to be discussing Dorce's gender identity, and in particular her previous identity as a male-bodied individual. However, given that she is a public figure, who has commented on her transition in her autobiography and elsewhere, such discussion seems to be permissible. I stress that this discussion is not with the purpose of judging or arguing how Dorce should or should not understand herself, but rather to think about how gender identity is understood in Indonesian popular discourse. In particular, while this is primarily a textual analysis, I try to be sensitive to Namaste's concerns that my research should not undermine the lives and experiences of the transgender people I study (Namaste 1996:185).

ten and spoken comments on her identity in addition to an analysis of her public performance of gender as an entertainer.

The principle sources for this article comprise the two films already mentioned. Those films were certainly written and produced as vehicles for the actor. They implicitly, and occasionally explicitly, refer to various aspects of Dorce's life experiences as well as public discourse regarding gender ambiguity and transition. Just as Hines has noted for some instances in the UK, it is not unexpected that these Indonesian sources, which are at least partly based on Dorce's lived experiences, may often be understood to be constructing fixed identities rather than destabilizing categories. Nonetheless, even though the title of her autobiography, *I am a woman*, is a statement of the essential nature of her being as a woman, there is a simultaneous recognition that her subjectivity is constantly in process, as signified in this instance by the need to continuously repeat the category and to publicly reaffirm her identity as a woman. As Aquarini Priyatna (2015:222) has observed, Dorce's autobiography serves as a 'conscious and continuous enactment of womanhood, but the statement reinforces the fluidity and contingency of femininity'.

Nonetheless, Dorce is also a performer, and both films include scenes where Dorce's character either cross-dresses or performs as a cabaret artist. It is for this reason that the films provide such interesting examples of the complex and multilayered discussions around notions of gender binaries generally as well as in a specifically Indonesian context. On the one hand the films and biography specifically seem to embrace the essential category of woman, but at the same time, through Dorce's performativity, cross-dressing, and constant reference back to her pre-transition identity and public knowledge of her transition, the films simultaneously disrupt, or trouble, that category.

This constant revisiting of her former identity is demonstrative of the process of 'becoming' as an identity in itself, which Butler (1999:xi) considers to be part of the transformational nature of being transsexual. While on the one hand Dorce defines herself as a woman, her performativity in the two films under discussion, and also in any number of subsequent concerts and interviews, simultaneously stresses her difference from other, 'normal' women, if not her constant inbetweenness. This difference is most obvious in her performativity on the stage. When singing, she often drops the register of her voice in the classic style of the drag artist (Newton 1972:101), accentuating that she is not quite what she seems.²⁶ This performance style can be easily observed in any

26 Such techniques have been discussed by numerous studies on drag and transvestite performance. For example, in her influential 1972 study of drag performers in the USA,

number of recordings from Dorce's career; it occurs at the beginning of the film in *Dorce ketemu jodoh* and also in *Dorce sok akrab*. To explore these instances of gender inbetweenness further, it will be useful at this point to turn to a specific discussion of the first of the two films.

Dorce Ketemu Jodoh

The 1990 slapstick comedy *Dorce ketemu jodoh*²⁷ tells the story of a female character called Dorce, who travels to Jakarta in search of success in the entertainment business. While she soon finds work as a pub singer, she also adopts male garb to secure work as a mechanic. The humour of the film revolves around the fact that she attracts different suitors in her male and female guises; dressed as a man, Dorce attracts the attention of a wealthy widow, Tante Gladiol, while as a female she catches the eye of handsome Rico. Things come to a head when both admirers visit her at home at the same time. A zany scene ensues where, helped by her maid, Dorce tries to meet the gender expectations of both devotees, swapping between male and female attire before being chased on foot through central Jakarta by her two love interests accompanied by a growing entourage of friends, neighbours, and a group of *waria* who just happen to be passing. Eventually, Dorce collapses under a tree saying 'It's better I be(come) just one gender—two genders, it's just made me confused, dizzy'.²⁸

Almost every scene in *Dorce ketemu jodoh* is framed around some sort of gender mix-up or personal reflection on individual identities. The tone is set in an early scene showing Dorce's arrival in Jakarta. When a *becak* driver addresses her as *Mas*—a term used to address males in Java—she grabs him by his shirt collar and almost pulls him out of his vehicle. '*Mas! Mas!*', she yells back at him, 'can't you see I am a woman (*perempuan*)', before thrusting her hips towards him as if this should give some sort of clue. Dressed in blouse, denim jacket, flared, mid-length pantaloons, and with a hand bag over her shoulder and sporting medium-length hair, there is little doubt that Dorce is presenting herself as a woman, albeit somewhat fiercer than might be expected. Given

Esther Newton noted that drag artists would frequently drop their voices, and remove female attire or wigs, in order to highlight the fact that 'the appearance is an illusion' (Newton 1972:101). See Murtagh (2013:25, 27–9, 34) for a discussion of specific instances of 'de-wigging' in New Order cinema.

27 Discussion of this film is based on a VCD version first released in 2000, and which remains widely available in Indonesia, at least in pirated form.

28 'Lebih baik aku jadi satu jenis saja—dua jenis, malah jadi bingung, pusing.'

that most viewers at the time (and since) would have been fully aware of Dorce's then recent transition, this deliberate engagement with her off-screen history ensures that the film's narrative collapses the stories of the fictional character and the real-life celebrity from the outset; a slippage which is further accentuated by the actor and character sharing the same name. Indeed, in the opening scene, in which the fictional Dorce imagines success in the capital city, her dream consists of footage of the real Dorce performing to a stadium full of fans. From the very outset the character's fictional journey is inextricably linked, indeed foretold, by the journey already made by the film's star.

As the film continues, the notion of Dorce's gender ambiguity is an ever-recurring trope. Not just through the obvious storyline of her cross-dressing as a man, but also when she is playing the role of the female character. The most obvious example of this is contained in the words of one of the songs she performs as a pub entertainer:

Don't ask who I am / Where is my home *kampung* / Don't be confused
and don't be unnerved / Watch me captivate you.
Don't think about who I am / Man or woman / It will make you
confused, there's no use / Just look and restrain your heart.²⁹

While the lyrics are clear in demanding that she should not be judged or understood in terms of her past, it is nonetheless surprising that the song also urges the audience not to think in gender binaries for fear that this will only lead to confusion. Indeed the song seems to be more appropriate for a *waria* than for Dorce's stated position of a woman who rejects the ambiguity of gender that is linked to the *waria* identity.

Dorce's character's female-to-male cross-dressing results from a difficulty in getting work as a woman and the notion that life in Jakarta is easier for men. Her cross-dressing should not be understood as embracing some sort of *waria* identity; the term *waria* is generally seen as being exclusively used for male-to-female transvestites. What is more, this is clearly a temporary—as well as part-time—change, meeting many of the characteristics of what Marjorie Garber, in her study of cross-dressing in Western cultural traditions, describes as a progressive narrative (Garber 1993:69). Dorce's character's rationale for cross-dressing is that 'it is safer to be a man in Jakarta'. However, diverging some-

29 'Jangan ditanya siapa aku ini / Dari mana kampung aslinya / Jangan bingung dan jangan terkesima / Lihat saya memikat hati. Jangan dipikir siapa aku ini / Laki-laki atau wanita / Nanti pusing tiada gunanya / Lihat saja tahankan hati.'

what from the pattern described by Garber, where there is no erotic pleasure involved in this kind of cross-dressing, and where thwarted heterosexual desire leads the protagonist to unmask, in *Dorce ketemu jodoh* it is the competing demands made on her by both suitors that lead her to declare the need to make a gender choice. It is not clear whether she gains much erotic pleasure from either match, though certainly the attraction from the older widow, Tante Gladiol, is depicted as the most absurd. As the film ends with Dorce slumped against a tree, topless (though her breasts are only visible for a moment), and still sporting one half of a moustache, it is important to note that we are not actually told what her final choice will be, though our knowledge of Dorce off-screen leads us to presume that her choice will be to live as a woman. Neither can we be certain whether she will choose a male or a female as her partner.

We should also observe that Tante Gladiol really thinks that she is wooing a man, not a woman dressed as a man—and much of the comedy revolves around the knowing audience watching the confusion within the diegesis. Intriguingly, in one scene Tante Gladiol finds Dorce's female clothes and make-up and accuses Dorce as a man of having an affair with another woman. Tante Gladiol is quite happy, indeed charmed, by Dorce's explanation that she cross-dresses as a female for artistic reasons. While adding yet another layer to the complexity of gender identity, Tante Gladiol's reaction is interesting for being more concerned with questions of fidelity than with potential gender ambiguity.

Nonetheless, the implication of the film's closing scene is that despite all the gender play and slippage around which the film's narrative revolves, Dorce should choose just one normative gender. Indeed, her decision comes after having been pursued down Jalan Thamrin, the central thoroughfare in Jakarta, by a group of individuals that captures a remarkable cross-section of Indonesian society. For as well as her male and female lovers, her maid, the security guard, and a collection of other acquaintances, the chase attracts the attention first of a number of policemen, and then of a group of *waria*. These last two groups offer starkly different alternatives for the performance of metropolitan masculinity. When she finally collapses against a tree, Dorce does so in the shadow of the phallic national monument, Monas, a symbol of the state's authority and former president Sukarno's masculinity—the only president for whom Dorce has not performed live. Pressured on all sides by suitors, fellow citizens, and the symbolism of the National Monument, it is hardly any wonder that Dorce collapses cross-eyed and confused, declaring she had better choose just one gender. The dialogue is clear enough, and seems to be expressing a desire for gender normativity and the stability of gender binaries. However, her appearance calls attention to our knowledge that this woman is not like other women,

but rather, as drawing on Kate Bornstein (1994), must be described using verbs which attest to the constant transformation of the new identity, or as Butler (1999:xii) puts it, the 'in-betweenness that puts the being of gendered identity into question'. Despite the resolve of Dorce's final declaration, it seems that this paradox, or, to use Butler's words, 'the moment in which one's staid and usual cultural perceptions fail' (Butler 1999:xxiv), encapsulates the ambiguity of the film's resolution, whereby the binary categories of gender are truly put into question.

Dorce Sok Akrab

Just like the film discussed above, *Dorce sok akrab*³⁰ is a lowbrow slapstick comedy in which most of the humour revolves around mistaken identity. Whereas misunderstandings and comedy in *Dorce ketemu jodoh* relate to gender identity, *Dorce sok akrab* reflects the other important transition in Dorce's life at this time by focusing on confusions connected to class and status, though questions of gender identity are also present. The story begins with two expectant couples making their way to a clinic. One couple is rich, as signified, among other things, by their car and dress, while the poor couple arrive by *delman* (horse-drawn cart), driven by the husband. Both women give birth to male and female twins, with the wealthy father choosing the names of Dorce and Kadir, and the poor father choosing Dorce and Kodir. In the general confusion in the clinic the twins are mixed up and given to the wrong parents.

The story then jumps 20 years to the present day to focus on the two sets of twins in East Java. Both pairs of siblings are played by the same two actors, Dorce and the well-known comedian Kadir.³¹ The spoilt children of the rich parents are causing too much trouble at home in Surabaya, and their father decides to send them to Jakarta, where they are to be educated in Western manners and customs. The poor twins are impoverished and failing to make much of a living as entertainers, and so decide to go to Jakarta to try their luck. Both sets of twins travel to Jakarta by plane; the poor siblings arrive

30 The VCD version (2000) of the film referenced in this discussion was kindly made available by Sinematek, Jakarta.

31 Kadir was a member of various comic groups, beginning from the mid 1980s. He made his first film appearance in 1987, where he met his most well-known comedy partner, Doyok, and the pair subsequently appeared in a number of films, though generally in supporting roles. In *Dorce sok akrab*, Doyok plays the Jakarta business associate's son, who is trusted to look after the wealthy siblings.

on time and are mistaken for the rich twins by the son of the rich father's business associate who has been sent to collect them. The rich twins arrive late and have to make their own way into the city, but both sets of twins end up staying in what is described as being the 'most luxurious hotel in Jakarta'.³² Numerous comedic scenes follow as hotel staff, shop assistants, restaurant staff, and record producers are left puzzled and perplexed by the identical sets of twins. As the film draws to a close the confusion comes to a head when the twins finally come face to face with each other, with each one asking the other, 'who is it that's the photocopy?' (*siapa yang fotokopi?*). The film ends with one of the brothers declaring that everything is 'too mixed-up' (*aduh, kacau ini*), as the hotel workers look on in disbelief, and the siblings themselves are left pointing at their 'photocopy', touching themselves as if to check that they themselves are real.³³

My interest in this film lies in its representation of different classes, and in particular its approach to social mobility. Representations of class in New Order cinema have been discussed at length by Krishna Sen (1994:105–30, 1986, 1991), but also more recently by scholars such as Eric Sasono (2008) and Intan Paramaditha (2011). Given the duration of the regime it is not surprising that approaches to social class in New Order film were far from consistent. As Sen notes, in the early years of the regime films were marked by a tendency towards a 'fascination with glamorous lifestyles and international milieux', disappointing commentators and journalists who regretted the failure of films to depict the lives of the majority of Indonesians on screen (Sen 1994:105).

As time moved on, however, and as the Soeharto regime's overarching ideology of development (*pembangunan*) gained ground, films engaging with rural development and poverty began to emerge (Paramaditha 2011:502–3). As Sen illustrates, however, the mobility of poor and downtrodden heroes

32 The movie location is the Kartika Chandra Hotel.

33 The synopsis provided in Kristanto's catalogue (2007:323) only bears a passing resemblance to the storyline of the final film, probably because the catalogue entry is based on an original synopsis written prior to production. The entry translates as: 'Pak Sugeng (Zainal Abidin) and Pak Slamet (Tile) are both fathers of twins and both call them Dorce (Dorce Ashadi) and Donny (Kadir). The two Dorses and the two Donnies are then sent to Jakarta temporarily, where Rudi (Johnny Kane), son of Pak Koco (Doddy Sukma), aims to meet the Dorce and Donny of Pak Sugeng, but mistakenly collects Pak Slamet's Dorce and Donny, who arrive first. Pak Sugeng's children then make their own way to Pak Koco's home, where the four of them cause confusion and strange things to happen, until Pak Sugeng and a talent spotter arrive. The misunderstandings are then resolved.'

and the victory of science (which belongs to the ideology of development) over rural beliefs, were generally depicted without recourse to class conflict (Sen 1994:105). Nonetheless, critique of development ideologies is evident in films across different genres. Films such as Ami Priyono's monumental *Jakarta, Jakarta* (1988) juxtaposed communities with contrasting fortunes in the city, while, as Paramaditha (2011:504) shows, criticism of the new middle classes was also to be found in slapstick comedies, such as those directed by Nya Abbas Acup. Sasono (2008) notes that around the same time as the Dorce films were in production, films such as *Badut-badut kota* (City clowns, dir. Ucik Supra 1993) and *Oom Pasikom* (Mr Pasikom, dir. Chaerul Umam 1990) were taking a tongue-in-cheek approach to the inequalities of the city and the exploitation of one class by another. Nonetheless, the late 1980s and early 1990s also saw the emergence of the incredibly successful *Catatan si Boy* franchise, which glamorized the consumerist lifestyles of the sons and daughters of the Jakarta elite, which Sen (1991) argues formed 'a discourse of legitimation of unequal access to wealth in New Order Indonesia, legitimation of an exceptionally luxurious lifestyle, accessible only to few, but acceptable to many'.

Dorce sok akrab hit the screens in the same year as *Catatan si Boy III* (Boy's diary III, Nasry Cheppy, 1989), perhaps the most opulent in the whole series in terms of depictions of a super-elite group of Indonesians.³⁴ But with its gentle mocking of the sense of entitlement of the privileged—the wealthy siblings proclaim themselves to be from 'the 5th richest family in Surabaya!' and demand to be taken to 'the most luxurious hotel in Jakarta'—*Dorce sok akrab* is firmly on the side of the underdog. While the elite twins remain ill-mannered and spoilt to the end, treating the various hotel workers and assistants with contempt, the poor twins, though occasionally shown to be lacking in knowledge of the ways of the modern, urban world, manage to use their charm, wit, humility, and determination to their advantage, and so succeed in establishing the beginnings of an entertainment career in the city.

While the sight of the humble siblings trying to navigate and fathom the lifestyle led by the country's elites may have elicited a mocking response from some viewers, many would surely have recognized something of themselves in the ludic representation of the *kampung*-reared siblings as they made their way in the city. It is the trajectory of the poor siblings, with its uncanny resemblance to the journey from poverty to wealth taken by Dorce herself, that is written to win the sympathies of the audience. In contrast to the *Si Boy* series, which legitimated exceptional luxury, this Dorce vehicle is far more questioning and

34 For more on the *Si Boy* series, see Sen 1991 and Murtagh 2013:58–60, 78–9.

even mocking of conspicuous consumption. It does not question the desire to escape from poverty, and the possibilities for upward mobility, with the correct patronage and guiding hand of good-spirited professionals. But it does—albeit in a light and amusing fashion—interrogate the arrogance and abuse of wider society by the privileged class. As such Dorce, then a rising star of popular entertainment, ensures that she continues to be seen as one of the people, rather than someone who becomes distant and aloof as a result of her success. Her humble origins remain an integral part of her new identity.

Despite the persistent theme of class difference, the only scenes in which we see a visual representation of the poor siblings' origins appear at the very beginning of the film. First, we see the stark difference in the means of the parents as they make their way to the clinic. While the rich parents become stressed when their way is blocked on the road by the slower moving poor parents, demanding their right to pass by, the humble couple remain steadfast in exercising their equal right to use the road, despite the harassment and presumptive privilege of the wealthy couple behind them. These differences are coded amongst other means through the transport they use—smart car as opposed to *delman*—and also through language. In establishing the differences, the poor father is shown to be humble yet also playful in argument, while the wealthy father comes off rather poorly against the linguistic dexterity of his poorer counterpart. Even in the maternity clinic the potential for confusion emerges, illustrating the fragility of their respective social statuses. The waiting husbands confuse the cries of their respective wives as they give birth; each calls out to offer support to the wrong woman. And the vulnerability of the binary between rich and poor is encapsulated when the nurse comes out to give news of the birth to the waiting fathers. She seeks clarification ('you're the rich one, right?'), before checking which names he wishes to bestow on his children. Thus, in this opening scene, identities are already constructed as fragile, easily confused, and insubstantial.

The next scene, set 20 years later, shows the humble condition of Dorce and Kodir's home while they discuss their ambitions and desire to earn their fortune in Jakarta. As they sit in their wooden shack, Dorce sings a few lines from the well-known song *Gubuk derita* (Shack of suffering): 'I acquiesce, even though life is difficult / I acquiesce, despite my suffering'.³⁵ But her brother quickly retorts, 'Actually I don't acquiesce'.³⁶ In direct contestation of the meaning of the original song, in which all manner of hardships will be tolerated, or

35 'Aku rela, walau hidup susah / Aku rela walau menderita.'

36 'Sebenarnya aku tidak rela.'

submitted to, in the name of love, the brother's words challenge both the song, and also the Javanese notion of *rela*, whereby the individual copes with life by submitting or acquiescing to fate.

Aside from the humorous aspects, the siblings' character profiles and motivations are clear. They live in poverty, they work hard singing, trying to save money, and like numerous poor Indonesians they hope that they can improve their lot by making their way to Jakarta, with its promise of great earnings and unrivalled opportunities for those who work hard. The contrast with their wealthy counterparts is stark. As the poor siblings sit in their wooden hut, determined not to submit to the lot they have been dealt in life, the other twins roller skate around their lavishly decorated, almost palatial living room. They have no respect for their father, and have been spoilt by their wealth and privilege to which they have become far too accustomed.

This story of rich and poor is further complicated by the detail that the siblings were mixed up at the time of their birth. One of the poor children (we do not know which) should actually be rich and one of the rich children should be poor. Maybe this explains the brother's unwillingness to accept his fate of poverty and suffering and the inability of the rich siblings to fully appreciate their privilege. More likely, however, we should see this mix up as supporting an underlying ideology that there is nothing intrinsic that differentiates rich from poor, and indeed, in accordance with the 1980s' ideology of development, the potential for upwards mobility is there for those who work hard and live honestly, and receive the help (mistaken or not) of a more wealthy patron. While this initial mix-up in the maternity ward is not explicitly referred to again, the final scene, in which each of them asks who is the 'photocopy' of the other, affirms the point that there is nothing to differentiate these people other than privilege and status.

While the film's ideology is certainly about moving upwards, a number of scenes function not only to mock the pretensions of the wealthy, but also to subvert them. In particular this occurs when wealth and culture are associated with Westernization, an association which coincides with the 'tendency to Western symbols' among Jakarta's young professionals expressed in the 1986 *Kompas* article mentioned in the introduction to this article. The rich siblings are sent to Jakarta, among other reasons, because their father wishes them to become more 'Western'. Classes are duly organized in the English language and Western cuisine and table manners. Of course it is the 'wrong' siblings who take these classes. The English language teacher despairs at their inability to repeat the phrases without mixing up the word order, eventually retorting that they must never have been to school. In response to this slight, Kodir turns the tables by introducing a tongue twister of his own in a mixture of Madurese

and Indonesian. Just as Kodir cannot get his tongue around the English, the Jakarta-based teacher cannot cope with the regional tongue twister. Once again, notions of identity, in this case of teacher and pupil, are turned on their head. Before long the entire staff of the most luxurious hotel in Jakarta is trying to repeat Kodir's tongue-twister, with varying degrees of success.

A similar subversion happens when an (Indonesian) expert tries to teach Kodir about Western cuisine. The joke is on the notion of teaching manners and about Western food from the very beginning. First, before Kodir arrives, the teacher takes some food from the plate while waiting for Kodir, decides to test it (*testing dulu*), puts it in his mouth, but then puts it back when he remembers he can't chew the food because he has forgotten to put in his teeth. Thus we have already discovered that the teacher is not quite living by the etiquette he is about to teach. Then the teacher tells Kodir that he is not feeling so well because of something he ate (*salah makan*): presumably Western food does not really suit his stomach either. The lesson starts with Kodir replying that he normally eats with his hand rather than the knife and fork he is told to use. The teacher retorts that it's not a *warung Tegal* (a cheap local-style restaurant), calling Kodir a 'hillbilly' under his breath (*kampung*). Kodir is told to keep his elbows off the table, and in return he asks where the rice is. Finally Kodir manages to completely subvert the class by saying he will follow the teacher's instructions if the teacher is able to follow his. Kodir then proceeds to demonstrate a test of coordination whereby one touches the right ear with the left hand while touching the nose with the right hand and vice versa. Naturally Kodir is an expert at this and the teacher is confounded. A passing bellboy sees the game and before long the whole hotel staff is trying to master the game, though never as successfully as Kodir. The lessons in Western etiquette are forgotten and once more Kodir has succeeded in subverting the attempts to Westernize him by responding with something much more fun and also requiring its own degree of dexterity. With the teacher absorbed in trying to master the game, Kodir settles himself at the table to eat the Western food in Indonesian style with his right hand and with his elbow resting on the table.

While much of the confusion and humour stems from Kodir's character, and Dorce seems to be taking more of a supportive role, we can understand the confusions above as reflecting on the two siblings. However, it is really on the occasions when she performs that Dorce comes to the fore in this film. As in *Dorce ketemu jodoh*, the songs also lend themselves to a further unpacking of the journey made by Dorce; as a stage performer, she constantly plays on the notion of inbetweenness, and the audience's expectations of such performativity. One of the two numbers she sings to win a spot as a cabaret singer is a well-known Dutch song—the language repertoire is another of her trademarks—written

in 1979 by Louisa Johanna Theodora 'Wieteke' van Dort, also known in Indonesia as Tante Lien. The singer/composer was born in Surabaya in 1943, but in 1957 moved to the Netherlands as a result of Sukarno's policies towards those who retained Dutch citizenship. The song, *Geef mij maar nasi goreng* (Just give me *nasi goreng*), sung in Dutch but containing a large number of Indonesian words, is a recollection of the large number of delicious foods she had eaten in Indonesia as a child, and a comparison of them with the less exciting Dutch cuisine. The song begins by telling of the cultural shock of the repatriation, that they had no idea how cold it was in Holland, but that the worst thing was the food: potatoes, vegetables, meat, and sugar on the rice.³⁷ In addition to being a song about the journey made by another female entertainer from Surabaya, there are again parallels with Dorce's life experience in terms of the inbetweenness of their identities. Tante Lien was expelled from the place she considered home to a place where it was judged that she should feel a sense of belonging, but which was instead a place completely unknown and alien to her.

The other song she performs is a Hindi number that is extremely well-known in Indonesia, titled *Sawan ka mahina* (Month of showers).³⁸ The song was written for the 1967 Bollywood film *Milan* (dir. Adurthi Subba Rao), a film about a couple who realize they have known each other in a past life. Thus, the theme lends itself perfectly to Dorce, who might be seen as reborn through her transition; indeed the song is also sung by the cross-dressing character of Betty in the Indonesian comedy *Betty bencong selebor* (dir. Benyamin S., 1978). The song is originally a duet and in the film the young man teaches the song to his female lover, correcting her pronunciation of one word. Dorce also repeats this scene in her performance, though in her version she plays both male and female roles, and in switching between male and female voices, reminds us of the gender play that her performance has long been built on. Thus in this comedy of errors too, based on rich and poor and privilege and resistance, Dorce's troubling of gender still bubbles under the surface. Indeed, it is performance based on gender transformation and inbetweenness that ensures her success both in the film and in real life.

37 'Toen wij repatrieerden uit de Gordel van Smaragd / Dat Nederland zo koud was hadden wij toch nooit gedacht / Maar 't ergste was 't eten. Nog erger dan op reis / Aardapp'len, vlees en groenten en suiker op de rijst.' This translates literally as: 'Then we came back from the Emerald Belt [that is, Indonesia] / That Holland would be so cold, we had never thought / But the worst thing was the food, even worse than during the journey / Potatoes, meat and vegetables, and sugar on the rice'.

38 The song was popularized in Indonesia, among others, by Rhoma Irama, who performed the song with the Indian artist Nandani.

Conclusion

Both films discussed in this article were planned and produced in the years immediately following Dorce's sex-reassignment surgery. Following on from the increased publicity she received as a result of the legal recognition of her change in gender and name, the films were presumably seen as beneficial to both the production companies, which could play on her growing celebrity status, and to Dorce, as an important way of boosting her profile. Dorce plays a female character in both *Dorce ketemu jodoh* and *Dorce sok akrab*. In this respect her roles reinforce her identity as a woman. However, despite this apparent clarity in how she defines herself, the plot of *Dorce ketemu jodoh*, and Dorce's actual performance in both films, support an understanding of gender identities which is far more complex, where notions of inbetweenness come into play. Kate Bornstein argues that transsexual people live lives which collapse notions of gender binaries, and, in her film roles at least, Dorce is also defined by that process of becoming, in which her current performance of gender is always carried out with reference to what has gone before. Similarly, the representation of class identities in *Dorce sok akrab* can also be interpreted using this concept of inbetweenness, whereby the poor characters who find themselves in a sudden position of wealth are appealing to the audience and are ultimately successful within the film precisely because they remain in a state of becoming wealthy, where their traditional and humble origins constantly surface to resist Western and elite class identities. Unlike the *Si Boy* series, which Sen argues was able to display opulent consumerism without questioning it, *Dorce sok akrab* is far more critical of the wealth and privilege of the elite; as a reflection of her own origins and the diversity of her fan base, Dorce's performance remains very much in negotiation between the glamour and wealth that her career has already brought her and the poverty and humility from which her success arose.

In the introductory section of this article I discussed the point that Hines and others have made with respect to the importance of recognizing the complexity of transgender identities. In her UK study, Hines makes a strong argument that contrary to the textual studies often carried out in queer studies, which argue that the transgender categories trouble or call into crisis fixed gender binaries, the study of the lived experiences of transgender individuals calls for closer attention to be paid to the diverse range of subjectivities falling under the transgender category. Far from troubling gender binaries, many of those subjectivities conform closely to normative gender regimes. However, as Hines recognizes in the case of British transgender individuals, transition does not

necessarily mean an end to gender play. It is often an ongoing process in which gender subjectivity may shift and continue to develop. This diversity of subjectivities is evident in the films and autobiography discussed in this article. While the meanings carried in the different texts might appear at first sight contradictory—the declaration that she is a woman while at the same time playing on the fact that she used to be a man—it is probably better to understand this range of meanings as signifying complexity. The continued gender playfulness, which is, of course, being performed for a generally normative audience, is also probably best understood as indicating Dorce's confidence as a woman. At the same time, there is a recognition that many of her fans will continue to understand her in terms of difference, on the basis that she is a woman who was formerly a man. Her performance style consistently plays on this knowledge and expectation.

Just as Dorce's journey across genders is one that is constantly replayed in her performance and also in her autobiography, her journey from poverty to wealth is also an integral aspect of her performance and her identity. In particular, we should note that just as the film *Dorce sok akrab* resists those Western symbols which had come to be markers of wealthy professionals, her performance and autobiography strongly affirm traditional and local cultures as being essential to her subjectivity. It is her positive revisiting of those traditions, her position of constant inbetweenness as someone whose success repeatedly constructs and reaffirms her humble origins, that continues to mark her particular style of Indonesian celebrity.

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